

SINGAPORE DECLARATION ON THE 15TH ARF

We, the Ministers of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, People's Republic of China, European Union, India, Japan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, and the United States of America, on the occasion of the 15th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in Singapore on 24 July 2008;

Recalling the achievements of the ARF since its inaugural meeting in Bangkok in 1994 in promoting greater trust and confidence in the Asia-Pacific region and bringing together key countries that have an impact on the geographical footprint of the ARF to where it now comprises 27 participants who are firmly committed to enhancing regional peace and stability;

Recognising the continued relevance of the ARF in promoting and maintaining peace, security and stability in the region and its vital role in building confidence and trust amongst its participants;

Reaffirming the role of ASEAN as the primary driving force of the ARF and emphasizing that the active participation and cooperation of all participants are critical for the success of the ARF;

Reiterating the basic principles contained within the 1994 ARF Concept Paper, which is an important foundational document that has guided the development of the ARF since its inception;

Welcoming the recommendations proposed in the Paper on the Review of the ARF and looking forward to the assessment of the recommendations of the Study of Best practices in Preventive Diplomacy in selected regional and international organizations, which can be considered further by the ARF as it pursues progress towards goals set forth in the 1994 ARF Concept Paper;

Concerned that despite the ARF's best efforts and its successful endeavours, security threats and challenges that could undermine the peace, security and stability of the region still exist, and that such challenges are increasingly multi-faceted and non-traditional in nature which require our common resolve to address them; and

Cognisant that the ARF and its working processes should evolve to ensure that it continues to be the main regional security forum in the Asia-Pacific region;

HEREBY DECLARE TO:

1. **Renew** our individual and collective commitment to build upon the achievements of the ARF and strengthen dialogue and cooperation in existing and new areas to promote and maintain regional peace and security;
2. **Further** the development of appropriate Preventive Diplomacy concepts, in line with our decision in 2005 to move the ARF from the Confidence Building stage to the Preventive Diplomacy phase, while ensuring that future development would continue to be based on the values and roadmap contained in the 1994 ARF Concept Paper, 2001 ARF Concept and Principles of Preventive Diplomacy, and Paper on the Review of the ARF;
3. **Strengthen** the existing ARF's organisational mechanism, including that of the ARF Chair, Friends of the Chair (FOC), ARF Unit and ARF Fund, through the mobilization of more resources, manpower and expertise;
4. **Commit** to undertake concrete and practical cooperation to address issues of common interests, with the view to build capacity, develop expertise and enhance coordination in areas that can contribute to the region's collective security objectives;
5. **Enhance** the cooperation, coordination and operational familiarity among our defence officials and operational agencies;
6. **Enhance** further the engagement between Track I and Track II in the ARF, as well as partnership ties between the ARF and other regional and international organisations particularly by exchanging ideas, experiences and best practices;
7. **Promote** greater awareness and understanding of the ARF's achievements, and its relevance to people in the ARF region as well as enhance the visibility of the forum, its objectives and activities, in promoting regional peace and security; and
8. **Further cooperate** to strengthen and develop the ARF, its mandate, and its activities so that the ARF can serve as the premier regional security forum in the Asia-Pacific region.

Adopted in Singapore, this Twenty-Fourth Day of July in the Year Two Thousand and Eight.